



**MESSAGE OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY
OF THE CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY**
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on the occasion of

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

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“The future of wildlife is in our hands”

Integral to the balance of nature, wildlife nurtures us with a sense of wonder and serves as a source of inspiration. Wildlife is also the basis of biodiversity. Biodiversity in the wild is just as important to our wellbeing as biodiversity in plants and animals used for human consumption. Wildlife is incremental to forestry, fishery and tourism livelihoods around the world. Quite simply, biodiversity keep ecosystems functional providing the ecosystem services that allow us to survive, get enough food to eat and make a living.

The conservation and sustainable use of wildlife is therefore a critical component of sustainable development, and should be part of a comprehensive approach to achieving poverty eradication, food security and sustainable livelihoods.

Yet despite the clear links between wildlife, sustainable development and human wellbeing, wildlife is under immediate threat. Some of the world's most charismatic species, as well as lesser known and perhaps less charismatic but ecologically important plants and animals stand at the brink of extinction. Habitat loss, climate change, invasive species, pollution and poaching are among the biggest threats.

This year's World Wildlife Day theme, “The future of wildlife is in our hands”, celebrates and pays particular focus on African and Asian elephants. Poaching and trafficking of ivory is one of the most serious immediate threats to African elephants, with Asian elephants subject to growing levels of poaching. As important seed dispersers, the decline of elephants can trigger the extinction of certain

plants which could cause declines in other species of wildlife that depend on them. This poses critical consequences for vital ecological processes, which if left unaddressed could aggravate further socio-ecological pressures and impacts. Therefore attention on this Day should garner efforts in developing strategies to preserve these precious species subjected to illegal trade in the wake of growing known and unknown pressures.

It is no exaggeration to say that wildlife is crucial to the lives of a high proportion of the world's population. For indigenous people and many local communities and some rural households, local wild animals serve as their source of meat protein and local trees provide their fuel. And both wild animals and plants provide components of traditional medicine used by people throughout the world. But while many people in the developed world may barely notice a reduced supply of a particular household item, people living in the developing world are often entirely dependent on the uninterrupted availability of local wildlife resources.

Every action has a ripple effect. For example, the illegal wildlife trade and the overexploitation of species not only harm species and ecosystems; they affect the livelihoods of indigenous people and local communities and negatively impacts tourist attractions, which in turn compromises efforts towards poverty reduction and the achievement of sustainable development. The overexploitation of species also threatens the planet. Overfishing not only affects individual fishing communities and threatens certain fish species, but causes imbalances in the whole marine system. The careful and thoughtful use of wildlife species and their habitats is required to avoid not only extinctions, but serious disturbances to the complex web of life.

The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as one of 13 members of the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) has been raising awareness of various aspects of sustainable wildlife management leveraging tools and fostering international cooperation to enhance the livelihood of local communities and to promote the conservation of ecosystems by private and community holders. A progress report describing the work undertaken by the CPW since the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be made for the twentieth meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, to be held in April 2016, in Montreal.

At COP 13 this December, Parties will have an opportunity to address sustainable wildlife management as a cross cutting strategic action for mainstreaming biodiversity into sectors including forestry, agriculture, fisheries and tourism. We would all do well to reflect upon what we can do to safeguard wildlife for the next generation. By conserving and sustainably using species we not only protect the ecosystems and

ecosystem services that underlie our economies and well-being, we help millions of people and help save the utterly irreplaceable planet we live on.
